



Summer perfect time for fresh produce

I'm trying to get my children to eat more fruits and vegetables this summer. Any ideas? I don't want to buy fresh produce just to see it go to waste.

Your instincts are on target — on both counts. Just about anyone, young or old, could consume more fruits and vegetables and be healthier for it. But what you don't want to do is buy a ton of produce just to see it rot in the produce bins in your refrigerator. That's a waste of money and nutrients.

But if your children are like most, they do need a higher intake of fruits and vegetables. According to the Produce for Better Health Foundation:

- Fewer than 15 percent of elementary school-age children eat the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables every day.
- Over half of all elementary school-age children eat no fruit on any given day.
- Three out of 10 elementary school-age children eat less than one serving of vegetables a day.
- One-quarter of all vegetables eaten by elementary school students are French fries.

Just how much produce should children be eating? You might be surprised at the amounts recommended by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans: Younger children should eat at least 1.5 cups each of fruits and vegetables each day, and older or more active children should be eating

up to two cups of fruit and 3.5 cups of vegetables each day. (Amounts are based on recommended calorie intakes for sex, age and activity level; check <http://www.mypyramid.gov> click on "Get a Personalized Plan" to find the amounts you and your children should be aiming for.)

In any case, here are some ideas to incorporate more fruits and vegetables into your children's diets:

- Take your children to the grocery store and let them choose a fruit or vegetable they like or would like to try.
- Add fruits and vegetables to your children's favorite foods — berries to cereal; shredded lettuce and tomatoes on sandwiches; sliced carrots or finely chopped cauliflower to soup; sauteed peppers and zucchini to pasta sauce; or red peppers, chopped broccoli and caramelized onion on homemade pizza.
- Encourage fruits and vegetables as snacks. If you start munching on snap peas, baby carrots, bananas and apples, your children will likely follow suit.
- Serve fresh fruit as dessert. What could be better than to finish a meal with some watermelon, cantaloupe, berries — or all three?
- Make sure fruits and vegetables are readily available. You know the saying "out of sight, out of mind"? Well, keep fruits and vegetables in sight, and you and your children will likely eat more of them.

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June is Fresh Fruit and
Vegetable Month.

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